

Town of Westford's
EAST BOSTON CAMPS
MASTER PLAN
AND SUPPORTING SECTIONS



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EAST BOSTON CAMPS MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

Kirk Ware (Chairman)	Citizen Representative
Dini Healy-Coffin	Board of Selectmen
Denise Brunelle	Citizen Representative
George Fletcher	Citizen Representative
Angela Harkness	Citizen Representative
Daniel Lamb	Citizen Representative
Toody Healy	Community Preservation Committee
Peter Mahler	Conservation Commission
Mary Ellen Tynan	Parks and Recreation Commission
Leslie Thomas	Water Commission
Nancy Rosinski	Westford Land Preservation Foundation

Consultants

Giezentanner Associates – Master Plan

Bill Giezentanner

Daphne Politis, Community Circle

Rick Taintor, Taintor & Associates, Inc.

Philip Benjamin, Benjamin Forestry Services, Inc.

Keeping Track, Inc. – Wildlife Management

Sue Morse

Centurion Group – Building Assessment

Goldsmith, Prest & Ringwall, Inc. – Land Survey

Staff

Steve Ledoux	Town Manager
Norman Khumalo	Assistant Town Manager
Pat Savage	Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Department

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Max Steiner	Citizen (Served as Co-chair)
Paul Cully	Citizen
Marian Harman	Citizen
Jim Lauzano	Lowell YMCA
Carol Shestok	Westford School Dept. 5 th Grade Camp
East Boston Social Centers	

Town of Westford's **EAST BOSTON CAMPS** **MASTER PLAN**



The East Boston Camps Master Plan dated April 26, 2007 consists exclusively of the fourteen pages that are so designated. The remainder of the documents are background materials and informational articles as well as summaries of the Committee's discussions, presented and provided for informational and reference purposes only. The Plan being presented for a vote by Town Meeting consists of these fourteen pages only, which contain a brief introduction, four specific Goals, fourteen Policies and various Implementation items. All other items are not part of the Plan being voted on by Town Meeting. The fourteen-page Plan has previously been referred to as the "Summary" the "Executive Summary" and "Goals and Recommendations".

April 26, 2007

EVOLUTION OF THE EAST BOSTON CAMPS MASTER PLAN

The Town of Westford acquired the East Boston Camps property on March 31, 2005 after a unanimous vote at a February 7, 2005 Special Town Meeting. The East Boston Camps Master Plan Committee was established with the charge of developing a master plan for the site (excluding an area for future recreation use off Nutting Road).

From 2005 to 2006, the Committee worked with the Board of Selectmen to develop and post interim regulations for the use of the site, developed a website to disseminate information about the Master Plan and use, contracted for a perimeter survey, contracted for a building assessment, engaged a wildlife specialist and a forester to advise on property use and management, developed a history of the property, and contracted with a consulting group to assist in the preparation of the Master Plan.

The East Boston Camps Master Plan presents information about the site's natural and cultural resources and a vision for its future, discusses and evaluates alternatives, and presents a framework for future decisions and actions. The community and the Master Plan Committee developed the plan through an open process that included numerous meetings and a series of public forums. The plan establishes guidelines and makes recommendations for the future of the site; some of those recommendations can be implemented immediately others will only be implemented as resources become available.

Community Participation

The community was actively involved in developing the plan through a series of public forums, meetings, site walks, suggestion boxes, a website devoted to the plan, notices and flyers, and the development of fact sheets and issue summaries.

Visioning Session—October 26, 2006

The first public forum was held to develop a vision for the future use and management of the East Boston Camps site. Over 100 people attended the meeting. Results of the meeting were written up and made available in the library and on the Committee's website. Based on this session, the Committee developed a vision statement, goals, and objectives for the Master Plan and began to explore different options for reaching those goals.



Options Exploration Session—February 1, 2007

The second public forum was held to assist the Committee in choosing among options for the future use and management of the East Boston Camps site. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting. Again, results of the meeting were written up and made available

in the library and on the Committee's website. The Master Plan is a direct result of these two meetings and reflects the Committee's efforts to be guided by this public process.

COMMUNITY VISION FOR THE EAST BOSTON CAMPS PROPERTY

Leading up to the Town's acquisition of the East Boston Camps site and during this planning process Westford residents often stated what an important treasure this site is, and how much they hope it will remain a place of natural beauty, peace, and serenity.

The following vision statement was developed from the first public forum held in October 2006. Approximately 100 people attended and participated in facilitated discussions to develop a common vision and goals for the future of the site.

VISION STATEMENT:

The East Boston Camps property will be open and accessible to all Westford residents. The property's natural features – including the forest, wildlife and water quality – will be protected and environmental impacts of human activity will be minimized. The feeling of serenity, peacefulness and quiet will be preserved. The camp tradition will be continued in some manner. Group use of the site will be allowed and managed by the Town.

Goals, Policies, and Implementation Recommendations

The following summary presents the goals developed by the community and a series of policies and implementation steps to achieve each goal. A brief synopsis highlighting the background information collected and discussed follows each of the goals. Several implementation steps are repeated because they help achieve more than one goal.

Goal 1: Preserve the natural resources and scenic beauty of the site.

Goal 2: Increase access for Westford residents engaging in passive recreation activities.

Goal 3: Continue summer camp programs, with a goal of including children of low-income families from the Town of Westford as well as urban areas, and other camp programs.

Goal 4: Establish an appropriate management structure to ensure that the goals for the site are met.

Goal 1:

Preserve the natural resources and scenic beauty of the site.

Policy 1a: Take actions to preserve the site’s serenity, quiet, and peacefulness, as well as its natural beauty and pristine character.

Implementation:

- ❑ The Conservation Commission, the East Boston Camps Advisory Committee¹, and the holder of the Conservation Restriction shall engage in a program of public information and education about the natural resource assets of the property, and how the Conservation Restriction and other actions can protect those assets for future enjoyment.
- ❑ Enforce the Conservation Restriction by making use of the site’s Caretaker, the holder of the Conservation Restriction, and the Westford Police Department, when necessary.
- ❑ Limit access on roads to authorized vehicles only. Provide signs indicating these areas are closed to unauthorized vehicles.
- ❑ Minimize use of roads by authorized vehicles.
- ❑ There shall be one central unpaved parking area.
- ❑ Roadways shall remain unpaved where possible and practical.
- ❑ Establish and maintain a “pack it in – pack it out” policy for managing trash and litter.



Policy 1b: Take actions to protect water quality in Burge’s Pond, Keyes Brook, and Stony Brook.

Implementation:

- ❑ Establish an ongoing program to monitor water quality, particularly the potential presence of invasive aquatic weeds.
- ❑ Continue a “carry-in, carry-out” policy for boating² to reduce the possibility of introducing invasive weed species to Burge’s Pond.
- ❑ There will be no organized town beach at the site.

¹ To be established. See Goal 4 on management structure.

² Only small boats that may be carried in to the pond will be permitted.

Policy 1c: Take actions to protect and increase wildlife diversity, and sustain and improve scenic vistas.

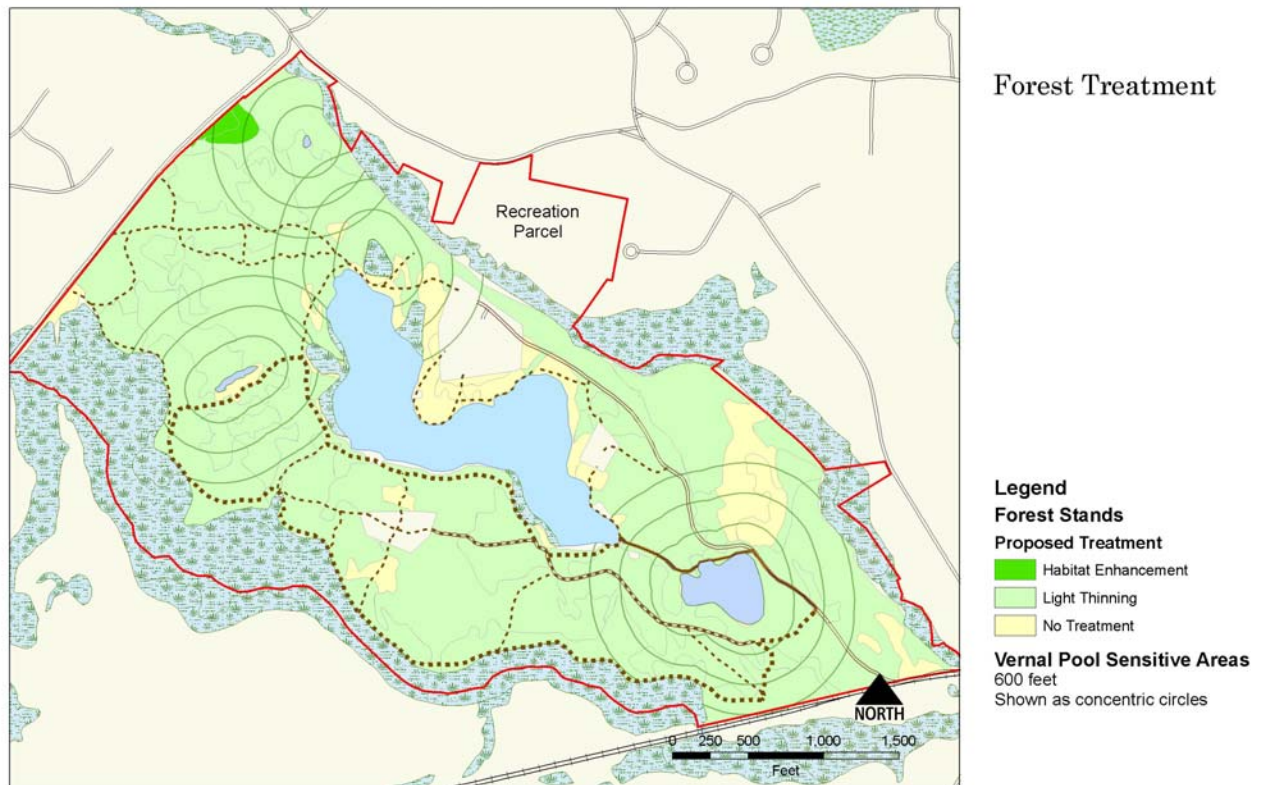
Implementation:

- ❑ Implement wildlife management actions proposed by Sue Morse, Keeping Track, Inc. (See Wildlife Management Report.)
- ❑ Establish a volunteer stewardship group to help monitor and maintain the property.
- ❑ Establish a 600-foot sensitive wildlife area around vernal pools. This area does not extend beyond the master plan area and is intended to maintain suitable upland habitat, but does not prohibit maintenance of roads, trails or forest management activities.

Policy 1d: Take actions to maintain and improve the health and diversity of the forest.

Implementation:

- ❑ Implement the forest management plan. (See Forest Management Plan.)

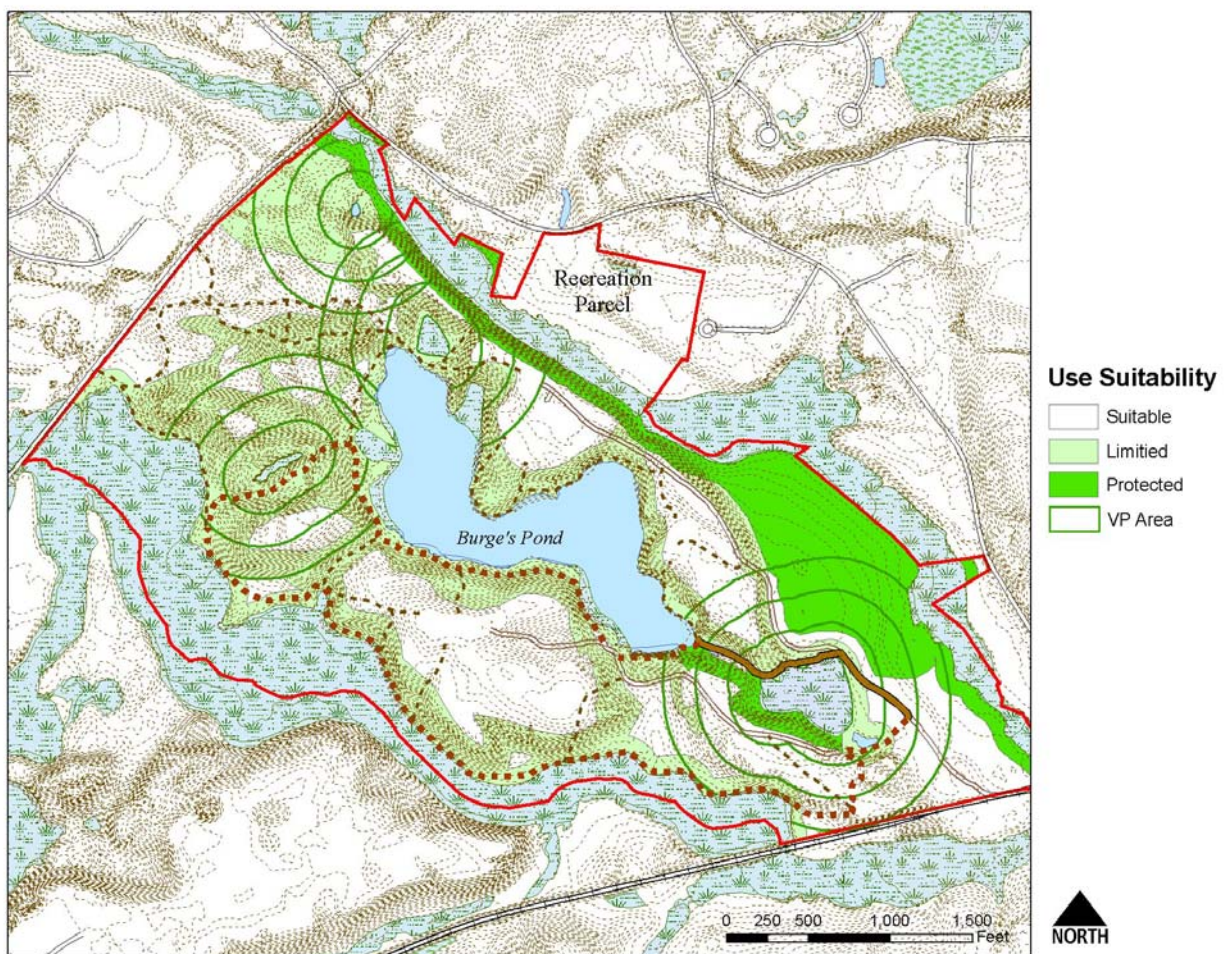


Map 1 – Forest Treatment

Policy 1e: Take actions to minimize disturbances of ecologically sensitive areas.

Implementation:

- Establish and follow guidelines of the “Use Suitability Designation” map.
 - Designate areas appropriate for trails and other activities (Suitable)
 - Limit uses adjacent to wetlands and on steep slopes (Limited)
 - Protect ecologically sensitive areas (Protected)
 - Exclude future trails and most other activities
 - Protect vernal pools and wetlands (VP Areas)
 - Allow maintenance activities, trails and interpretation of natural resources
 - Allow carefully controlled forestry operations



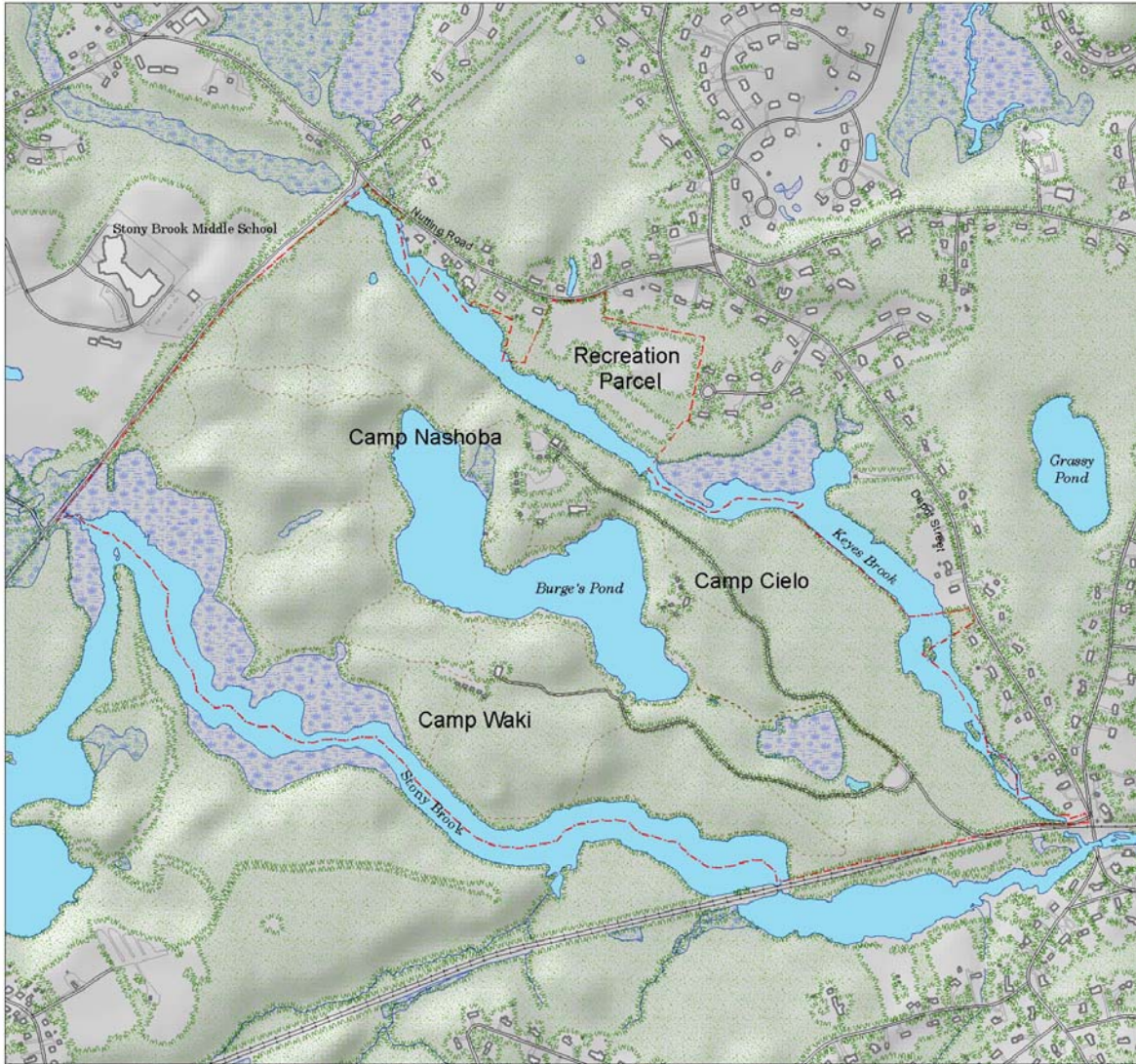
Map 2 – Use Suitability Designations

Suitable = areas suitable for anticipated uses and trails

Limited = areas suitable for limited uses and trail development – steep slopes and wetlands

Protected = ecologically sensitive areas

Natural Resources & Scenic Beauty Discussion Highlights



Map 3 – Site Map

Natural Resources

Spectacular Site

- ☐ Stony Brook
- ☐ Keyes Brook
- ☐ Pristine Burge's Pond
- ☐ Wildlife
- ☐ Place of beauty, peace, and quiet

Importance to Town water supply

Recognized by conservation restriction

Burge's Pond Preservation

Biggest Threat

- ❑ The accidental introduction of invasive weeds from boats could spread rapidly and choke pond
- ❑ Very expensive to control

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Requirements

- ❑ Food, water, space, cover, and nesting sites

Increase attractiveness of site for wildlife

- ❑ Maintain and provide a greater diversity of habitat components
 - Vegetative diversity—more food plants, etc.
 - Structural diversity—such as dead snags, nest boxes, and brush piles



Forest Management

Existing forest is the result of past forest management and 1938 hurricane

- ❑ There has been some selective thinning of trees about every 20 years

Forest Management Plan

- ❑ Forest lacks structural diversity—many trees are about the same age
- ❑ Much of the forest is currently suitable for some degree of selective thinning

Goals of Forest Management Plan

- ❑ Improve wildlife habitat
- ❑ Increase structural diversity (create more age classes of trees, leave dead snags, create brush piles, etc.)
- ❑ Create one or two 1½ -acre clearings to encourage berries and other food plants
- ❑ Create a more open appearance in certain limited areas
- ❑ Continue to maintain a more diverse forest as an important feature of the site

Goal 2:

Increase access for Westford residents engaging in passive recreation activities.

Policy 2a: Ensure adequate year-round public access to the property for passive recreation.

Implementation:

- ❑ All summer camp activities shall be located on the north side of Burge's Pond leaving the south side available to the public year-around.
- ❑ If capacity is required, sleeping cabins may be moved from the south side of the pond to the designated areas on the north side of the pond. Bath facility and lodge on the south side of the pond may be retained and remodeled for group uses or may be demolished.

Policy 2b: Manage and limit use of facilities and buildings by organized groups.

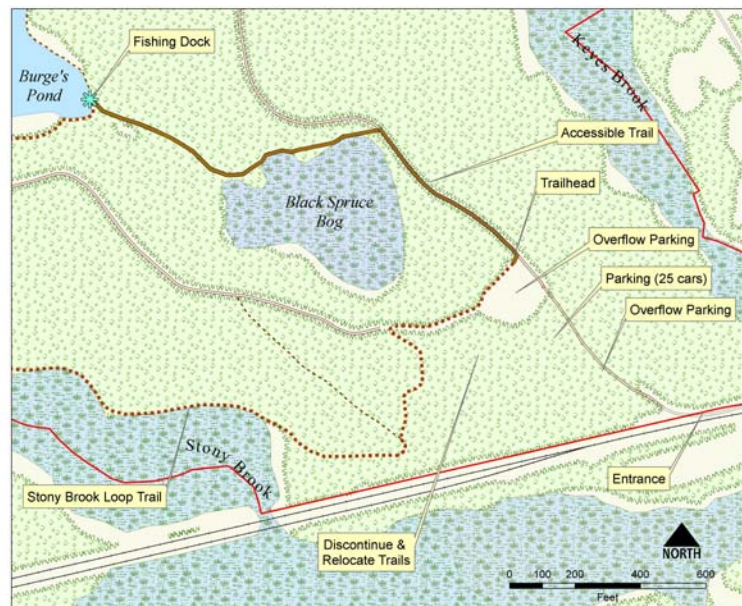
Implementation:

- ❑ Regulate organized group use of building facilities and large group use of property through a permit system that includes user fees.

Policy 2c: Improve and clarify parking, vehicle access, and pedestrian circulation.

Implementation:

- ❑ Improve the existing gravel parking area.
- ❑ Improve grading and drainage and mark handicap spaces.
- ❑ Provide bike racks.
- ❑ Limit motorized access on roads to authorized vehicles only. Provide signs indicating that roads are closed to unauthorized vehicles.
- ❑ Minimize the number of camp vehicle trips to limit negative



Map 4 – Parking Area Improvements

impact on the property.

- ❑ Roadways shall remain unpaved where possible and practical.
- ❑ Establish a central trailhead, clarify trail system, and mark trails.
- ❑ Relocate the welcome kiosk to the new central trailhead at the entrance and include a trail map, regulations governing the property and information about the site.
- ❑ Delineate and clearly mark the existing loop trail on the south side of the property and encourage its use by the public when camp is in session.
- ❑ Develop a trail management and maintenance system.

Improved Public Access Discussion Highlights

Remove Camp Facilities From South Side of Burge's Pond

- ❑ Make this attractive area more accessible to visitors
- ❑ Minimize area of site used for daily summer camp activities
- ❑ Remove specific buildings from south side of Burge's Pond (option—retain lodge and bathhouse for public use)

Improve Existing Parking

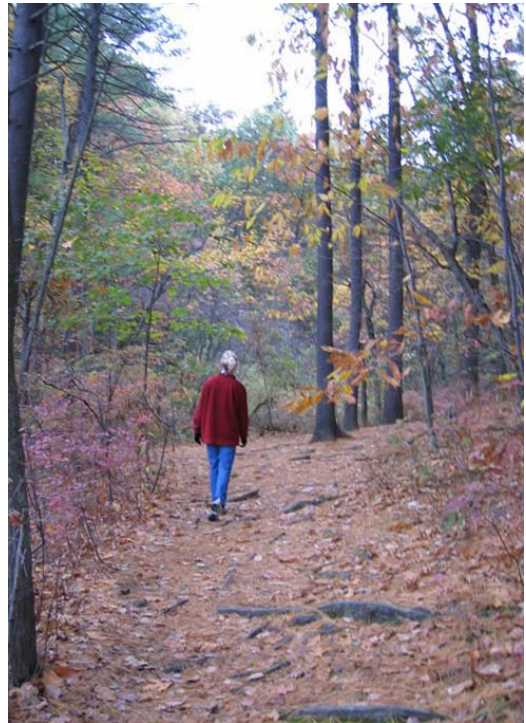
- ❑ Safety
- ❑ Convenience
- ❑ Minimize impacts on natural resources
- ❑ Approximately 25 spaces including HP
- ❑ Some overflow parking for special events, etc. (along access road and in grassy clearing)
- ❑ Minor grading
- ❑ Natural drainage swales
- ❑ Gravel
- ❑ Log wheel stops
- ❑ Centralized trailhead and information kiosk
- ❑ Signs to prevent unauthorized vehicle access

Improve Handicapped Access

- ❑ Improve existing path along black spruce bog to "Ice House" beach
- ❑ Graded 8'-wide pathway
- ❑ Crushed stone finish
- ❑ Two benches along pathway
- ❑ Floating dock with anchor pilings (also available for launching small boats)

Minor Improvements to Trail System & Signs

- ❑ Safety
- ❑ Convenience
- ❑ Make the site more inviting
- ❑ Relocate some trails near parking to clarify trailhead
- ❑ Mark main loop trail along Stony Brook and Burge's Pond



Goal 3:

Continue summer camp programs, with a goal of including children of low-income families from the Town of Westford as well as urban areas, and other camp programs.

Policy 3a: Continue the tradition of the Westford schools fifth grade camp.

Implementation:

- ❑ Support the Westford Public School system in their continuing efforts to carry on an educational outdoor camp.

Policy 3b: Continue the tradition of an overnight summer camp managed by an outside operator where possible and practical. Continue the tradition of a summer day camp conducted by an outside operator or by the Town of Westford.

Implementation:

- ❑ The camp operator shall make every effort to provide camp opportunities for low-income, urban children with a goal of at least 20 to 25% of the camper population being in this category.
- ❑ All camp operations shall be conducted so as to minimize the negative impact on the land and camps should include an environmental education component.
- ❑ Overnight and day camp facilities shall be limited to the north side of Burge's Pond and be conducted for up to eight weeks during the summer (plus a staff training session). If required for security purposes, the road through the camps may be closed to the general public during the camp season.
- ❑ The maximum number of campers at any given time shall not exceed 200, with the exception of the Westford Public School's camp.
- ❑ Camp and group user fees, donations and/or grants shall pay for all camp operating costs and the costs of maintaining the buildings used for camp activities.
- ❑ If capacity is required, sleeping cabins may be moved from the south side of the pond to the designated areas on the north side of the pond.

Camp Discussion Highlights

Program

- ❑ Current overnight program includes seven to eight weeks of summer camp divided into one-week and/or two-week sessions
- ❑ The overnight camp for boys and girls (number of campers limited by current capacity of septic systems) could be run in a consolidated Camp Nashoba (north side) site with a boys' cluster and a girls' cluster of cabins (sleeping cabins relocated from south side of Burge's Pond)
- ❑ Camp operator could also run coeducational day camp sessions at Camp Cielo
- ❑ There could also be a one-week counselor training session at the beginning of the summer.

Staff

- ❑ Staffing for the camps is regulated by the state. Existing buildings provide accommodations for a limited number of overnight camp staff.

Facilities

Camp Cielo, the existing day camp, has 9 buildings located on the north side of Burge's Pond:

- ❑ A dining hall/activities building,
- ❑ Bathhouse,
- ❑ Five cabins,
- ❑ A store, and
- ❑ The director's residence,
- ❑ The day camp could operate out of these buildings and use the day-camp beach.



Camp Nashoba currently has 17 buildings located on the north side of Burge's Pond, including

- ❑ The boathouse,
- ❑ Main lodge,
- ❑ Infirmary,
- ❑ Office,
- ❑ Six cabins,
- ❑ Bathhouse,
- ❑ Cook's residence, and staff duplex,
- ❑ Activities lodge, and
- ❑ Three storage/ maintenance buildings,
- ❑ The addition of the girls' cabins may require a new bathhouse. Overnight boys and girls could share the main lodge and other facilities.

Camp Waki, located on the south side of Burge's Pond, currently has 7 buildings including five cabins, a lodge, and a bathhouse.

Goal 4:

Establish an appropriate management structure to ensure that the goals for the site are met.

Policy 4a: Management structure must ensure future protection of the site's natural resources and the public water supply.

Implementation:

- ❑ Ownership of the property shall be transferred from the Board of Selectmen to the Conservation Commission.
- ❑ The Conservation Commission shall be the manager of activities on the property and will coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Commission and other relevant Town bodies and volunteers.

Policy 4b: Management structure should take advantage of the expertise available from existing Town resources and provide for ongoing public involvement.

Implementation:

- ❑ An advisory committee that may include representatives of all stakeholders (Community Preservation Committee, Board of Selectmen, Water Department, Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, the holder of the Conservation Restriction and several at large members with relevant interest and/ or expertise) shall meet on a periodic basis, as necessary, to discuss policy and operating issues affecting the property and shall make recommendations to the Conservation Commission.

Policy 4c: Provide for management and control of camp and group use activities.

Implementation:

- ❑ The Conservation Commission, as manager of the activities on the property, shall use the expertise of the Parks and Recreation Commission when appropriate.
- ❑ A plan for responses to emergencies should be established and posted.

Policy 4d: The management structure must provide for future fundraising to support the property.

Implementation:

- ❑ Encourage the establishment of a "friends" group for fundraising and volunteer efforts.

Management Structure Discussion Highlights

Future Good Management Is Critical

Management Goals

- ❑ Protection of natural resources
- ❑ Protection of Town water supply
- ❑ Environmental education/camp activities
- ❑ Minimize costs to taxpayers

Considerations For Future Management

Importance of Natural Resources

- ❑ Protecting site's natural resources a priority
- ❑ Wildlife habitats
- ❑ Sensitive resources
- ❑ Part of a series of wildlife corridors
- ❑ Forest management

Importance of Water Supply

- ❑ Protecting Town's water supply
- ❑ Understanding the importance of the aquifer

Future Camp Operations

- ❑ Maximize public access and enjoyment of entire site
- ❑ Expertise in camp operations

Expertise of Existing Town Resources

- ❑ Town Manager's Office
- ❑ Selectmen
- ❑ Conservation Commission
- ❑ Water Commission
- ❑ Parks and Recreation Commission
- ❑ Need to have one body responsible

Continuing Public Involvement and Fundraising

- ❑ Many residents care about the East Boston Camps site
- ❑ Future financial support from taxes is unacceptable to many taxpayers
- ❑ Other models
 - Friends Groups
 - Roudenbush Center

Ongoing Property Management Costs

Responsibilities for ongoing care and maintenance will increase as use increases

Approximate annual cost

- ❑ At least \$50,000

